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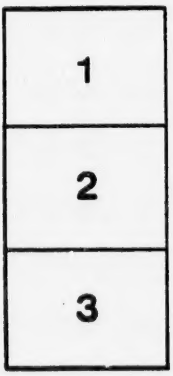

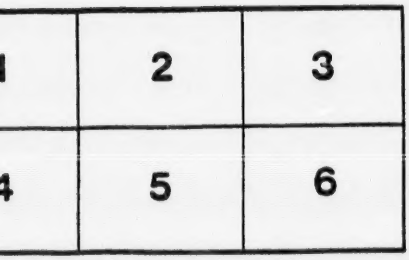

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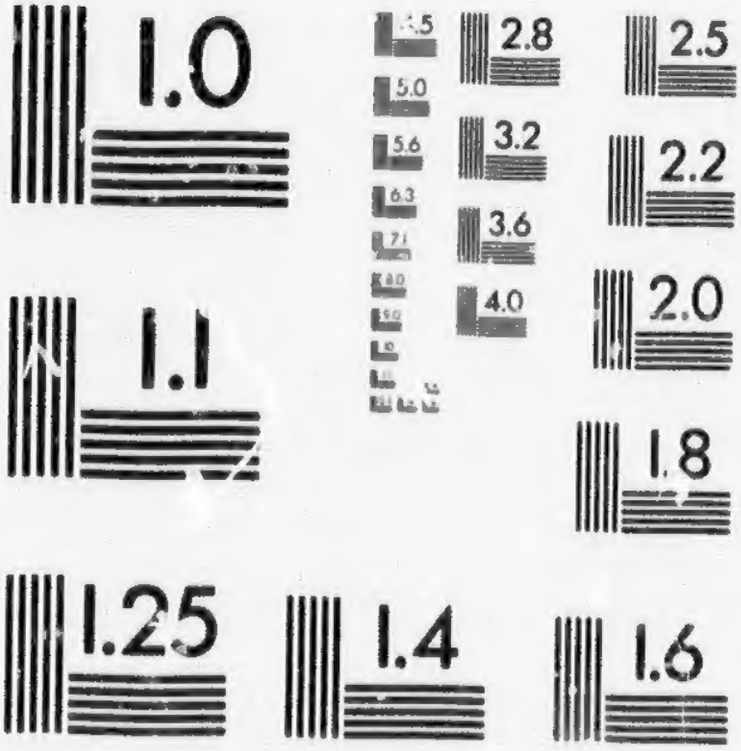

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THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE

ADAPTED TO PROMOTE

INTELLECTUAL IMPROVEMENT.

A Lecture

DELIVERED BEFORE THE ACADIA LYCEUM,

WOLFVILLE, N. S., DEC. 8, 1857.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM SOMMERVILLE, A. M.,

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER, CORNWALLIS, N. S.

Published by Request.

SAINT JOHN, N. B.
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LECTURE.

In a work of no common order which lately came into my hands, entitled "The Christian Life," the author refers his purpose to attempt a development of character as formed upon the Bible, to a remark of Professor M'Dougall on "The extensive diffusion of the idea that evangelical religion, in its strict personal form, comports ill with solidity and compactness of intellect;" and his own observation of the "prevalence of this idea in certain departments of literature." It cannot fail to have come under the observation of persons reasonably conversant with life and character, that there are mixed up with the mass of society, to say the least, a few who are disposed to claim for themselves a greater measure of intellectual superiority and cultivation, who are not ashamed to exhibit their claims detached from Christianity, and affect to look down with contempt or pity upon those who have placed their necks under the yoke of Christ, and are pleased with his burden. When Chesterfield was in France, a lady of rank took the liberty of asking him how the Parliament of England, composed of the most talented and cultivated men of the land, could tolerate such an absurdity as Christianity. His reply was to this effect, that he had no doubt they were fully prepared to set it aside, but they had not as yet been able to discover any thing better to substitute in its room. The witty infidel perhaps said more than he intended. It is sufficient to stultify the mocker, that his superior sagacity has never been able to furnish any thing superior to the teachings of the Book, whose foolishness excites his scorn.

We are disposed to take higher ground than that the earnest, the resolute, and the believing study of the Bible, is compatible with the possession of a vigorous and cultivated understanding; and to use the words of Thomas DeQuincy, as quoted by Bayne, "My faith is, that though a great man may, by a mere possibility, be an infidel, an intellect of the highest order must build upon Christianity;" and that there is no department of study so well adapted to the growth and maturity of the understanding as Biblical study. The man of natural powers, say, if you will, not merely moderate, but below mediocrity, shall be raised, by the study of the Bible, to a position of respectability among his fellows, and display a penetration and grasp, in some instances, calling forth surprise. The masculine sense, and elevated independence, of the unlearned and ignorant Apostles, are ascribed by their persecutors to their having been with Jesus.

Aware of the singular inconsistencies that are observable in the character of man, it can scarcely be considered an argument in favour of the Scriptures, that such men as Newton and Locke, Milton and Young, Chalmers and Hall, were Christians. It merely proves that mental superiority, and a belief of the supernatural origin of the Scriptures, may coexist, and so silence the insane and affected assumption, that weakness and ignorance alone can bow to the slavery of Biblical priestcraft. But there are other associations that are not so easily disposed of, involving necessarily the improving and elevating influence of Bible truth. The fact of the union of Christianity and civilization, is too patent to be questioned; but conscious or latent infidelity would urge, that Christianity has been grafted upon civilization. To admit that it is the fruit of Christianity, would be to concede its highly intellectual basement, and ultimately its Divine origin. Accordingly, when missions to the heathen were first projected, the wisdom of this world would sneer the proposal out of existence. Folly! what could the Bible do among savages? Clergymen were amongst those who ridiculed the proposal to proceed immediately to christianize the savage. Civilizethem first; teach them science, the arts of orderly life, and then preach to them. Those who suggested such a scheme, do not seem to have been aware that they were bearing testimony to the exalted character of the teachings of the Bible, when they insinuated that they were too broad for the grasp of the uncultivated mind of a heathen population. But the Missionary advanced; and there are few now,—none whose daring does not exceed their discretion,—who would not admit that the Bible is the most efficient instrument of civilization; and that adapting itself to the lowest grade of information, it forms and elevates and matures the intellect. Introduce the Bible where you will, and its might and mastery are soon felt. The head and hands of Dagon are broken off before it; and there is no other alternative —it must be expelled or rule. Very early after the promulgation of Christ crucified, men began to feel that by the instrumentality of men who held no weapon but the Bible, the world was being turned upside down; and very soon, the emperors, the senators, the priests, of old Rome, awoke from their slumbers of security, and were confounded, when, looking abroad from the summits of their seven hills, they saw wing after wing of their gorgeous establishment tumbling to the ground, and felt the earthquake shock produced by their fall. And yet there is no imposing force brought against them. A few poor, ignorant, unpatronised men, hold in their hand the conquering sword of the Spirit. It is probable that the insurrection of the Hindoos, which has bathed their plains in blood, and filled Britain's land with sorrow, had its origin in no affected apprehension that there was a design to make them Christians by force. Missionaries were increasing in number, and extending their operations. The whole administrative force of the Government was in favour of the Hindoo superstition. But they

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must have begun to feel the grasp of a strong hand, in which they were powerless; and ignorant of the pressure of God's hand, they could furnish no other explanation of the tendency to fall before the God of the Christian; and accordingly refer the oppressive power to their rulers, and hearken to the merest abstraction that might appear to implicate the "powers that be" in a design to overthrow their religion.

The connection between the spread of the Bible and a nation's advancement in every thing that implies intellectual improvement and prosperity, is too constant and uniform to be ascribed to an accident. It would be a prodigal waste of time to compare the condition of Christian and heathen lands. But to make it manifest that it is not nominal Christianity, but the Bible, that is connected with the difference in intellectual and social position, we compare Christian nations with reference to that instrument.

Thereare only two countries in the world in which the Bible may be said to be an open book—Britain and the United States; and the intellectual superiority of these countries is unquestionable. In these there is no department of science and art that is not cultivated; and the human mind is roused to an activity and expansiveness of operation, that proclaim the fetters broken which bind down the energies of man. Other lands can furnish men of great eminence in particular spheres; but these can produce their giants of every complexion of literary attainment. Other lands borrow or buy our knowledge and our men. There are excepted spots in both countries, that serve to establish the connection between the spread of Biblical knowledge and progression; and to shew that the former is not the consequent but the precursor and sure pledge of intellectual, and consequently of social eminence. Witness the South and West of Ireland, and the Southern States of the North American Union. These countries lag far behind, or deteriorate, in which the Bible is either partially or wholly a proscribed book—permitted only to speak what may be agreeable to the priest or slaveholder to hear. Nothing can save them but the removal of every restriction, that the Word of the Lord may have free course; when even these shall evince the elasticity of the human mind, when subjected to proper training, and the Word shall be glorified in the reactionary movement. The Celt shall no longer be a byword, and Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands.

But I shall attempt to show that the consequence of the study of the Bible must be the promotion of the *versatility*, the *expansion*, and the *elevation* of the human mind.

1. Biblical study is adapted to promote versatility of intellectual effort.

It is a matter of common observation that the exclusive application of the mind to one subject has the effect of ultimately inducing an incapability of directing its energies to other departments of inquiry. Familiarity produces ease of application; and the thoughts

almost spontaneously turn in that direction in which they can run with most facility, and consequently most satisfaction. A full fund of amusement is accordingly supplied, by marking how invariably some men, in conversation, continue to introduce the topic with which they are most conversant, and the uneasiness they manifest when bound up to the examination of topics new to them. It is hard to say whether the reluctance to put forth a new effort is in some cases the parent or the child of inability; but I presume the general opinion will be in favour of the latter.

An apt illustration of the effect upon the mind of being accustomed to diversified or restricted exercise, will be found from a comparison of the natives of Europe and America, who have been reared in external circumstances nearly similar. The established division of labour in the Old world shuts up an individual to one occupation. There you find the mere farmer, the mere mechanic, the mere scholar, who is lost when he is removed beyond the circumference of his own circle. In a new country, necessity lays the inhabitants under an obligation to turn their attention to an endless variety of employments. The farmer who has spent the day driving his team, may be found in the evening making a pair of shoes for his wife—occupying a wet time in the construction of a plough or an ox-yoke. You need not, therefore, be surprised to find him prepared to meet his friend in a mercantile speculation—pleading his neighbor's cause in a court, and mounting the rostrum on the Sabbath, preaching no contemptible sermon to his fellows. The mind is trained to adapt itself to matters endlessly diversified, and nothing is presented with which it is not prepared to grapple.

The cramping effect of the habits of the Old world is counteracted, and the versatility of the New is regulated and improved by the study of the Bible. There is scarcely a subject that is fitted to call the mind into healthy exercise, that is not introduced. There we are led into the study of history, biography, and the manners and customs of different times and lands; political economy; poetry of the very first order is furnished to us; human character is exhibited under aspects and circumstances of every variety; prophecy aids us to gaze with interest, heightened by curiosity, into future years; while the reasoning powers are fully taxed in pursuing arguments adapted to furnish worthy exercise for the strongest. The lover of eloquence finds there the savoury meat which he craves; and the imaginative meets with pictures that may satiate the most extravagant fancy. All these things are so strangely blended, that over those who are devoted to the study of the Bible, it throws a spell that cannot be broken. Whatever delight the pages of Gibbon or Macaulay, of Stewart or Butler, of Smith or M'Cullough, may afford to the students of history, metaphysics, or political economy, the mind is wearied by being kept in full tension, and requires repose; while the Bible, by its abrupt transitions, affords the relief which the mind craves, the object, the glorious object of the whole never

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lost sight of, nor the unity of the composition rudely broken. The startling anecdote, the bewitching episode, introducing us into the domestic circle or chamber of secret counsel, arrest the attention of childhood, and draws it onward to the examination of facts and principles and rules worthy of application when gray hairs proclaim the decline of life. If I were asked what training is best calculated to prepare the mind for entering on any such studies as are to fit the man for future usefulness with personal enjoyment, I would say, the study of the Bible; and perseverance in the study will be found subservient to direction and success in any legitimate department, by the very discipline to which it subjects.

I cannot pretend to illustrate the foregoing view by entering into details. Take two specimens of reasoning. We assume that the argument is correct and conclusive. To study the Bible, the correctness of its positions must ever be regarded as settled. And the careful student, with whatever misgivings he enters upon his task, never fails to reach inspiring confidence. The unbeliever or the doubter is like Hume, who is reported to have acknowledged that he never read the New Testament through with care. These examples, which I propose to introduce, are brought forward because, as the connection between the premises and conclusion is not obvious, they furnish materials for the exercise of the reasoning powers. Nor is it my intention to analyze the arguments for the purpose of illustrating their conclusiveness, but simply to exhibit them. (1) In Romans iv., Paul represents David as describing the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works, and quotes the first and second verses of the 32d Psalm in confirmation of his appeal. But in these verses the Psalmist *expresses* nothing but the blessedness of the forgiveness of sins, of the covering of transgression, and the non-imputation of iniquity. The imputation of righteousness, of righteousness without works, is not once mentioned—not even righteousness either with or without works. Yet the Apostle so clearly apprehends the connection between what is expressed and the imputation of righteousness without works, that he unequivocally represents David as describing it. The investigation of the argument shall supply a lesson in logic as good as any found in Watts or Whately. The statement is approached with the greatest satisfaction, because we are not to inquire whether the reasoning be good or bad, but to trace the connection between the premises and the conclusion in an argument known to be good. The attempt of the infidel to invalidate the conclusiveness of the argument, may help to deliver him from his doubts of the origination of the reasoning with Him that cannot err.

The next specimen is found in the discourses of our Lord. He charges the Pharisees and Scribes with proving themselves partakers with their fathers in the blood of the prophets. But he bases the proof of the indictment upon acts to which, I do not hesitate to say, no man not led by the Spirit of Christ, would have appealed. It is

commonly regarded as a favourable indication of the revival of the spirit of the confessors and martyrs of other days, that the places of their interment are sought out, their spirit and principles applauded, and that Old Mortality is not satisfied with chiselling out anew the time-effaced inscriptions on their tombs, but erects tombs and monuments, at great expense, and without number, to consecrate the spots where they fell, or where their dust still reposes. Of a similar circumstance our Lord takes hold. Matthew xxiii. 29: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, if we had been in the days of our fathers we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." Luke xi. 48: "Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres." This is a startling conclusion; and the more startling, that in the first blush of the premises, we are utterly unprepared for it. But it must be just; and it will prove a good intellectual exercise to discover the connecting link.

Take two examples of addresses to the imagination. One involves as bold an image as was ever presented to meet the craving of the excited fancy. The despotic king of Babylon smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke He ruled the nations in anger; but he also must come to his end. The effect of his overthrow is to diffuse rest and joy. Death and desolation have a respite. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet. They break forth into singing. "The fir-trees rejoice, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us." But there is yet another picture, so grand, so awful, that in the contemplation of it, a thrill of horror passes through the frame. The repose of the dead is disturbed. The multitudes of rulers and people who fell under his oppressing hand rush in one tumultuous throng to hail his approach, and to utter their triumphant scorn of his insane assumption and real weakness. An unwelcome recognition is that of the proud king by those whom he had crushed and slaughtered. The apprehension of the solitary Baptist, whom he had unjustly beheaded, rising from the dead, filled Herod with alarm, surrounded, as he was, by the elements and instruments of power. Is there, then, an imagination so vigorous as to realize the horror of a king once—a king no more—around whom his untold victims congregate in all the frenzy of anticipated vengeance? A few words uttered under Divine direction are sufficient to delineate the overwhelming horrors of such a meeting. "Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, all the chief ones of the earth; it has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak, and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols. The worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer! son of the morning."

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The idolatrous king of Israel likes not to hear the truth—brooks not a master, and surrounds himself with hundreds of prophets, whose lips are formed only to words of peace and adulation. But Ahab must see and feel himself enveloped with the elements of a power, against which he is no more able to contend than the feather against the hurricane that rends the mountains. And Micaiah, whom he hated, whom he doomed to bread and water of affliction, shall introduce him to a panorama, in the midst of which his own likeness is drawn, consigned by a Divine fiat to the sport of spirits fallen from their high estate. The colouring is too vivid, for Ahab to repose when the images have faded away from his imagination. He sees that sight till the delineation puts on the character of a dread reality. He affects to disregard the prophet's painting; but he will go disguised into the battle. What did he see as he went out? what, entering the field of bloody strife, and all the while he awaited the result of the deadly struggle? What Micaiah saw, and delineated too faithfully not to leave an indelible impression. He may shut his eyes; but he sees that. He opens them upon the combatants; but sense is not a match for imagination. He still sees what Micaiah saw. What was that? Something to rouse and regulate the imagination, beyond anything that Homer or Virgil, Scott or Byron, ever wrote. It is a magnificent picture. "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth and do so."

The world, which God has formed, has its Arabias, and its Saharas, and its Shamos. They are traversed not without interest. They are crossed for the sake of the fertility by which they are surrounded. They have their oases also, and there is water beneath, which may be brought up by digging. There is nothing, therefore, singular, in that the other work of God—the Bible—should have its deserts also. I am not skilled to dig for water there. But shall I say nobody can do what I cannot do? In passing over the surface, the oasis, the pleasant spot for rest and repose, is obvious. I may point out what is on the surface. We turn to the first book of Chronicles. There is there a large desert extending over nearly twelve divisions of the book; and as we draw to its termination, it clearly indicates the near approach of a rich country, by the more frequent recurrence of patches of rich vegetation. When we trace the formidable array of unpronouncable names, we are ready to say, the production of Divine wisdom could have dispensed with this section. Not so fast. We shall find refreshing spots curious and useful. In the first

chapter, there is an indication of the time of the distribution of the earth, interesting to the historian and antiquary. The second chapter furnishes us with a lesson on the subject of Israelitish slavery. The Bible is often appealed to in behalf of our Southern neighbours. We do not deny the existence of slavery among the covenant people of God. Let the slaveholder make his best of the admission. He must admit that the slavery which the Bible owns is not incompatible with the reception of a slave for a son-in-law. I presume the man who gives his daughter to a slave, would not afterwards tread on his daughter's affections, and sell her husband. "Sheshan had a servant, an Egyptian, whose name was Jarha; and Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant to wife." The same chapter supplies information that certain families were specially devoted to literary pursuits. The families of the scribes dwelt at Jabez. Also from the fourth chapter, it appears that certain more servile occupations were fixed in the line of families. Accordingly, there is reference to he families of the houtes of them that wrought in fine linen; to the potters and gardeners, who cultivated their several trades in their families. One place of rest from the fourth chapter. "Jabez was more honourable than his brethren; and Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, O that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast; and that thine hand might be with me; and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me. And God granted him that which he requested." It would be worth while to traverse a wide desert to find the residence of a man breathing so fervent a spirit of piety and devotion.

It is not the object of the Bible to teach us the manners and habits of a people, and such allusions are just what we might expect; but they furnish definite information, and shew us that there is loss in passing over the least promising parts of the Divine word.

2. From this imperfect display of the variety which the Scripture presents, we pass to examine its adaptation to promote the expansion of the human mind.

There is an elasticity in the mind of man, by which it adapts itself to subjects that are employed to call it into exercise. The best natural talents would be dwarfed by continuous application to trifles. Who ever heard of a buffoon and showman rising to eminence? Whatever may be the natural endowments of the farmer or the mechanic, if the operative part of his profession, ordered by custom or the example of others, exclusively occupies his attention, he is little elevated above the clod he turns, or the timber or the metal which he works; and his capabilities are so completely obscured, that their existence is scarcely recognised; while a Hugh Miller may be a hard-working stone-cutter, and by devotion to subjects which afford active exercise to the mind, and supply incentives to reach forward, forward still, acquires a world-wide renown, and leaves an impression on his age. Wilberforce promised in the early part of his career to rise no higher than the fashionable and fasci-

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nating jester, till that revolution in his character, which brought him into constant contact with the Bible, changed his destiny, and placed his name among the names of the great men of England, and inscribed it upon the commemorative tablet of social advancement. And well is that book fitted to improve, enlarge, and regulate the mind that is cast into its mould. I pass over the by no means unimportant circumstance, that it directs the attention to the works of creation in their variety and magnitude—that it represents the man, who excelled in wisdom by a special blessing from the Lord, as a distinguished poet, an investigator of the different departments of vegetable and animated nature, and an importer of the rare, the curious, the beautiful of beasts and birds, as well as of precious metals and stones, while I would fix your thoughts on the government of God as a subject of study well fitted to develop the powers of the most vigorous intellect, by calling forth existing energies, and eliciting renewed and increased exercise.

The first thought that presents itself, is the universality of the Divine government. This alone is an overwhelming thought—universal and unrestricted power constantly put forth. In the words of inspiration, "He doeth according to his pleasure in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this world." None can stay his hand, or challenge his will, or right, or wisdom. Nothing can exceed the impressiveness of the manner in which the power of God is exhibited. He speaks, and it is done—He commands, and it stands fast. He wills, and the object is accomplished. But this is not the only aspect of the Divine government that the Bible calls us to contemplate, admire, and study. It is, if possible, still more captivating to think that this expansion of Divine power is connected with the most exact attention to details. Individuals in heaven and on earth are not less under the Divine notice, dependent upon the Divine care, than if they were the sole objects of the Divine cognizance. The acts, and the words, and the thoughts, are all subject to the controul of the Highest Lord. This was the knowledge the Royal Psalmist confessed to be too high for him, and to which he could not attain. The obscure and neglected by man are not overlooked of God. The poverty-stricken widow shall feed Elijah many days out of a handful of meal and a little oil, because God commands it; and another's cruise shall not cease to furnish oil until her creditors are satisfied, and her sons liberated from undeserved chains. The Bible carries out our views still farther. The beast, the bird, the reptile, are a part of his subjects, over which he exercises a direct controul. Nothing can be presented to us less deserving of regard than the movements of the worm. Has God any thing to do with this? Is it not entirely fortuitous? Let us hear. To shelter Jonah from the heat, God caused a gourd to spring up hastily: a worm however smote that gourd, and it withered. No accident at all—God prepared that worm. A sparrow cannot fall to the ground without our Father, and the hairs of our head are all numbered. Under such

teachings we are brought of necessity to recognize the constant presence of God, and to say "Whither shall I go from thy spirit or flee from thy presence?" An object worthy of all observance is ever present to the instructed eye, and when little things are presented to the mind they are viewed as the minute parts of a great whole, to which they must be referred. They are seen as we would examine a drop of water, with the ocean composed of drops before us, or a particle of dust, while we stand upon the earth of which it is a constituent part.

Circumstances endlessly diversified, and events unnumbered, all, all, without any visible or demonstrable bond of connexion, we are taught to view as co-operating immediately or remotely to one ultimate issue—important to individuals, to nations, to the most magnificent of the world's rulers. What an astonishing display does the Book of Esther furnish of the combination of many occurrences, apparently fortuitous and completely dissociated. The world is full of lucky coincidences, happy chances, unfortunate accidents. The triflers in the meantime, unobservant, unreflecting, sport themselves in indolence and security. The Bible student meets with no bad luck or lucky chances. He may not be able to account for every occurrence that may come under his observation, or explain the connexion of such occurrences with one another or with one end, but because he knows the existence of such connexion, passing events furnish materials for mental exercise and for observation. The Jews, scattered over the one hundred and twenty seven provinces of Ahasuerus' empire, must not perish by the hands of malignant ambition. Yet the decree has gone forth according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed. There is no other miracle interposed than that which is of constant recurrence, according to the ordinary processes of the Divine government. Let us look at the circumstances that enter into combination to secure the object. Ahasuerus makes a feast for his nobles and gets drunk. In his frenzy he orders the Queen into his presence, to exhibit her beauty before his friends. She refuses. A polished courtier, ready to minister to the vilest passions of an excited master, proposes her dismissal and a selection for the throne of Vashti from the beauties of the empire. Esther, the Jewess, is brought before the king, and by a lucky chance obtains the preference of the capricious monarch, and becomes Queen of Persia. Haman, by whose instrumentality the decree against the Jews is procured, with true heathen superstition, must have the decree executed on a day of good omen. He casts lots from day to day, but, most fortunately, he did not find a day to his mind except one which allowed nearly twelve months to elapse between the promulgation and the execution of the decree to destroy. Thus ample time was left to devise measures, if measures may be devised, to deliver his victims. Bigthana and Terest, two of the king's chamberlains, conspired against the life of Ahasuerus: Mordecai happens to find it out, and discovers the traitors;

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and the event is recorded in the chronicles of the kingdom. One night the king Ahasuerus could not sleep, and as good luck would have it he calls for the chronicles of the kingdom to be read, and better still the place happened to be that which recorded Mordecai's fidelity; and better yet, this was just the night before Esther was to present her petition in favor of her people. Here are circumstances—the king's drunkenness, Haman's lot, Mordecai's discovery of a treasonable plot, the king's wakefulness, the king's choice of amusement—circumstances having no more apparent connexion with one another or with any given results, than my lecture and the Sepoy mutiny; yet so combined in the deliverance of the Jews, that no human being could tell how the end could have been secured independently of any one of them, or devise any other combination that, without a deviation from the ordinary operations of Providence, would have led to the same results.

There is yet another aspect of the Divine administration, presented in the Book, that furnishes materials for extending the operations of the human judgment. Schemes which are devised to defeat the Divine counsels form a part of the machinery by which those counsels are wrought out.

In this we recognize the absolute mastership, the unerring wisdom and the sleepless Providence of the Divine administration, which cannot be traced as they are delineated in the sacred record, without the realization of an exhilirating and an invigorating influence exercised over the inner man. The enemies of God pursue their work without interruption: they proudly step forward, and exultingly anticipate the issue: their hand is put forth to seize the object of their pursuit. He that sits in heaven smiles derisively; another hand touches them. They turn to learn the cause of interference. Their schemes are defeated, and their hopes are blasted; their consternation is complete; they discover that they have been laboring for their own discomfiture. Joseph's dreams clearly indicate his future pre-eminence in his father's house. His expectations must be disappointed. He is sold into Egypt, and they shall see what will become of his dreams. They shall see. Through the slavery to which he is doomed, he mounts to the second place in the land of the Pharaohs. He must fall under his master's displeasure, and be placed in irons, that he may be delivered from his master's hand: he must be forgotten by the butler, that he may be delivered from prison—not by the influence of a subordinate, not by the special grace of the sovereign, but to meet the hard necessities of sovereignty, and that the hand of God alone may be seen in his advancement. There must be famine in Canaan, and Joseph's brethren must come down to receive bread at Joseph's hands. All his dreams are already accomplished before they awake from the security in which they had indulged that they should hear of him no more.

The Lord of life must be betrayed and murdered. Now the Jews shall keep their place and nation: the people shall no longer be deluded by his seductive eloquence, and astounding miracles: the

old teachers shall recover and retain their ascendancy. Care must be taken that no fictitious rumour of a resurrection shall mar the effect of this victory over innocence: the sepulchre shall be sealed and guarded till the eventful time shall have passed. The enemies of Christ sleep in peace. Their guard shall early arouse them from their slumbers—the unwelcome, the impartial, the first witnesses of the triumph of the Lord over Priests, over Pharisees, over Romans—over death itself. Soon these skilful plotters, these wild fools, shall learn that they had done—done what? What the hand and counsel of God had determined before to be done—What Christ came to do: operating all the while to expedite that glorious supremacy which comprehends their own subjection and that of all besides. But

3. *The Bible supplies the means of* ELEVATING *as well as of expanding the intellect.*

Often has it been reiterated that we are the creatures of circumstances. To a certain extent it is true. We are subjected to a thousand influences that warp the judgment, modify the affections, form the habits, and mould the whole character—the man; and there is not found, in the wide range of terrestrial observation, the means of emancipation from these influences. The individuality of the man is hardly recognizable: he is a particle of the mass of humanity, and a participant of its form and affections—earthly, sensual, devilish. The Bible alone presents objects which, once apprehended, set the mind free, and exhibit it in its constitutional exercise; putting forth its mighty energies, and discriminating between the things that are excellent and honourable, and those that have acquired merely an adventitious importance.

Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel. What eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, God has revealed to us by his Spirit. And there is yet a glory to be revealed; but the language of man does not supply terms to declare it; and there is an allusion to every thing that is esteemed among men, to foreshadow its character and attractiveness. We don't know what we shall be.

The man who has been brought under the commanding apprehensions of eternal glories, and has learned that temporal existence is but a moment of his being, and realizes that the things of earth are as fleeting as the shadows of a summer cloud, is raised above the influences which distort and debase the life that now is. Poverty puts on robes of splendour, and takes its stand side by side with wealth. The mighty differences that otherwise exercise such controul over man's feelings and pursuits, fade into nothingness. Mean men are vanity, and great men are a lie. Which is to have the preference? *Vanity* or a *lie?*

There are two aspects of poverty that cannot be contemplated without melancholy. One poor man—no not a man—a being in human shape, knowing nothing better than food and raiment, licking, like the ox or the dog, the hand that supplies meat and drink. Another bows his head and goes heavily, ashamed of his

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destitution. Do we discover here the men in whom the word of God dwells richly? No, no. These are of the earth, and earthy. Poverty necessarily degrading! Poverty a disgrace! Christ had not where to lay his head. He became poor. The joy that was set before him supplies the explanation of the case with which he wore the garments of poverty, and endured other ills. He was not degraded nor ashamed. Moses lost his relish for the pleasures of sin and for the treasures of Egypt, and chose the affliction and reproach of the people of God, so soon as he had learned to fix his eye upon the recompense of reward. Paul was prepared to proclaim the affliction of the present time as not worthy to be compared with the glory hereafter to be revealed, and therefore submitted cheerfully to the loss of all that he had once accounted valuable. And they are not to be numbered, who have been subjected to weariness and painfulness, to hunger and thirst, to cold and nakedness, in anticipation of a better resurrection. Such men are in no danger of seeking the increase of their gains by any indiscretion, or of sacrificing their independence for what they might thus grasp. Abraham would not have it said that the king of Sodom made him rich. He did go forth for the deliverance of Lot, and brought back the people of Sodom; but it was not for the sake of such rewards as the king of Sodom could give.

This suggests that the man who derives his views of human life and human prospects from the Bible, is not purchasable by man. It was the doctrine of Pitt, that every man has his price. He was ignorant of the Bible—an infidel. The duties of his place the believer in Scripture will discharge; but money cannot procure his abandonment of the course of uprightness. The worldling cannot understand him. The Papal legate pronounced Luther an unreasonable beast because the Pope could not bribe him to change his course. The prophet of Judah, whom the false representations of a pretended prophet afterwards seduced, could not be prevailed on by Jereboam's rewards to turn aside from God's counsel.

Power loses its influence—all the terrors of despotism are incapable of turning him aside who sees the invisible One. A more noble spectacle was never seen than Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, braving the terrors of Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace: "Our God is able to deliver, and he will deliver us. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." What else than the visions of futurity sustained those who had trial of mockings, scourgings, bonds, imprisonments, who wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented. Let society be leavened with such; and thefoundation is laid of that confidence, which gives the charm to social connexion, dependence, and intercourse. The ruler does not fear to be sacrificed by popular whim or popular selfishness, and the people's jealousy of their rulers is neutralized. There is no danger of the officer being abandoned or massacred by his soldiers, nor is there cause of apprehension that the officer may be prodigal of the soldier's blood to secure his own fame or gain. The path in

which the merchandize of the world is carried is smoothed. The cords of affection are strengthened. We know the *men*, their position, and their purpose. To use a current phrase—we know where to find them.

The Bible supplies the means of terminating the unseemly partisan strife that deranges the social machinery, and casts a gloom over all lands into which it has found an entrance. Earthly glory pales before the glory that is seen by faith. Elevated social position is not affected. There is something truly noble in the simplicity of the widow's reply to Elisha, who would speak for her to the king, or to the captain of the host, in recompense of the kindness she had shewn him—"I dwell among mine own people." The man whose conversation is in heaven, is not ignorant of the importance of an elevated position, nor of its burdens; neither is he ignorant of its responsibilities. He knows that the ruler is God's minister. The burden he will bear, the responsibility meet, that he may act in subserviency to the interests of the members of society. But as for any honour that is separable from a constant and faithful discharge of the duties of his place—an honour borrowed from position—the glory that is to be revealed eclipses it. The olive tree is too happy in its fatness, by which God and man is served—the fig tree is too fond of its sweetness and good fruit—the vine will not leave its wine, that cheers the heart of God and man, to seek to be promoted over the trees. It remains for the bramble, in its condescension, to ask the trees to put their trust in its shadow; and even the bramble will wait to be asked to rule.

Bear with one thought more. Envy, alike destructive to itself and its object, falls before the commanding power of the Bible. Can we envy the wealth that cannot be carried hence? the power that so soon passes away? Shall we find the envious among those who have treasures in heaven—a crown of glory that never fades? Give us the teachings which enable the scholar to look *up* without a grudge, and *down* without contempt. The wheels of life, then, move smoothly on a road prepared. The greatest barriers to the reciprocation of undisguised and unquestionable affection are removed, and cordial fraternization places together the rich and the poor, the prince and the peasant, in happy recognition; while each derives, from the other, the assistance which his position enables him to give. The poor is exalted, and the rich is brought low, and both rejoice. The truth is illustrated, that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

When the Word of God dwells richly in me in all wisdom and all knowledge, and only then, I am entitled to say, Young *man*, study the Bible. And when the Word of God is your study, the object of your confidence, and hidden in your heart, then, and only then, you are entitled to say "*I am a man.*"

THE END.

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